

DELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE



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July, 1948

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MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA INC.

April 21, 1948.

Mr. Lawrence E. Spivak,
 Publisher,
 Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,
 570 Lexington Avenue,
 New York 22, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Spivak:

I am happy to inform you that as a result of nation-wide
 balloting by some two hundred members of Mystery Writers of
 America, Inc., members of your staff have won two of the six
 Edgar Allan Poe Awards for distinguished achievement in the
 mystery field during 1947. The winners:

HOWARD HAYCRAFT, named best mystery critic of the
 year for his "Speaking of Crime" reviews in EQMM.

ELLERY QUEEN, for the year's outstanding contribution
 to the mystery short story, as editor of EQMM and
 of numerous anthologies.

The "Edgars" are being presented at MWA's annual Edgar Allan
 Poe Awards Dinner tonight, which, as you know, marks the birth-
 day of the detective story -- the 107th anniversary of the
 original publication of Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."
 Congratulations!

Sincerely

Lawrence G. Blochman

Lawrence G. Blochman,
 President, MWA.

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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Hughes Allison is the first Negro detective-story writer to have his work appear in EQMM. He was born in Greenville, South Carolina, on March 29, 1908. At the time his father was a state office Superintendent for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, the world's oldest and largest Negro business organization; his mother was a teacher, and later the principal, in Greenville's Presbyterian parochial school. Both parents were college graduates. Mr. Allison's maternal grandfather had been a South Carolina magistrate, one of the nation's first Negro judges. Just prior to World War I, the author's mother was one of sixty Negro women who were trained by the Federal Government at Hampton Institute to do propaganda work. In 1919 the family moved to Newark, New Jersey, where Mr. Allison's father continued his work with insurance companies and his mother became the Executive Secretary of the Sojourner Truth Branch, YWCA. The author attended Bergen Street Grammar School, then Barringer High School in Newark, and Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey. In 1932 Hughes Allison started his writing career by becoming the "ghost writer" of half a dozen now-forgotten novels. His first short story was published in "Challenge Magazine" in 1935. About this time he met the late William Jourdan Rapp, worked for him, and learned to write radio scripts.

In 1937 the Federal Theatre produced Mr. Allison's first play, "The Trial of Dr. Beck." It was the first Federal Theatre production to be brought from outside of New York to Broadway, following Orson Welles's production of "Dr. Faustus" into the Maxine Elliott Theatre; it was the only play written by a Negro which the Federal Theatre produced on Broadway; and it was the first play in which the present stage-screen-and-radio star, William Bendix, had a Broadway role.

Since then Mr. Allison has written for the National Service Bureau, the New Jersey Writers' Project, and the New Jersey WPA Information Service Bureau. In 1941 another play, "Midnight Over Newark," was produced at the Mosque Theatre in Newark and so dramatically publicized the absence of Negro doctors and nurses in Newark's City Hospital that there are Negro physicians and nurses there now.

Mr. Allison is married. His wife, Elitea Bulkeley Allison, is a Senior Children's Librarian in the Newark Public Library.

ABOUT THE STORY: "Corollary" won an Honorable Mention in EQMM's Third Annual Contest. It is a story that just had to be written and just had to be published. The protagonist is a Negro detective named Joe Hill and to the best of your Editor's knowledge, this is the first attempt — at long last — to do a serious and sincere job of putting a Negro detective on paper

realistically. This is the first attempt to project in words a Negro detective who is a character rather than a caricature. Mr. Allison wrote your Editor an 8-page letter discussing his aims and future plans. We wish space limitations did not prevent our quoting the letter in full, but we will give you parts of it now, and perhaps additional excerpts later, if other adventures of Joe Hill appear in EQMM.

"The first story about Joe Hill," explains Mr. Allison, "is meant to be a tiny fragment among an infinitesimal number of fragments incident to reassembling a huge and important picture. A long time ago that particular picture was mutilated and torn out of its frame; it was placed thereafter in the darkest and yet the most costly room of a great museum. . . . The museum has a name: America. The picture also has a name: Negro."

Further in his letter, Mr. Allison asks an extremely interesting question: "Could tough, hardboiled Sam Spade or suave, gentlemanly Ellery Queen enter that dark, costly museum-room and single out the culprits? While it's quite possible they could, it's improbable they really would. For neither Sam Spade nor Ellery Queen is equipped to think with his skin. Moreover, merely apprehending the room's culprits is not the most important factor involved."

Now you understand more clearly what we meant when we said that this story just had to be written and just had to be published.

COROLLARY

by HUGHES ALLISON

JOE HILL should have been assigned to the case three months before its bolder principals accidentally tangled with a radio patrol car and were arrested that Wednesday morning in Oldhaven. But neither Inspector Duffy nor Chief Richard Belden had ordered Joe assigned to the case in the beginning. By that Wednesday it was late. Already a pernicious web — fashioned out of mutilation, terror, and indecision — had begun to coil itself around four unsuspecting persons: a pair of stupid, elderly grand-

parents; an alert but inexperienced child; and a sincere, though too-exacting, schoolteacher.

It was late Wednesday afternoon, a few hours after the arrests had been announced in the public press, that Joe was finally summoned to the Chief's third-floor office.

Belden, seated behind his desk, was in high humor. "Huh!" he growled. "One guess! What's in the cell block?"

Joe grinned, "The cure for a three months' headache."

"Right! But they're punks," Bel-

den declared. "I've had a good look at 'em. And only one thing the papers have said in the last three months really fits."

"What's that, Chief?" Joe asked.

"Their handle — 'the Bandit Quintet.'"

"The Chief means," Inspector Duffy explained, "we've caught ourselves five yellow jerks with a yen to sing."

Joe said, "With or without persuasion?"

"Without," Duffy replied. "And plenty loud, in a good key, for as long as we want."

Belden said, "I've been a cop for a long time. So I've seen lots of talkers. I don't pretend to know what makes 'em do it. But I do know how to handle 'em. Treat 'em easy, take your time, let 'em spout — and comb every bit of what comes out for leads."

"That's the play all the way," Duffy agreed.

"Not a single one of this Quintet gang seems to have a previous record," the Chief said. "That may be why our stools failed to produce. But just the same. Dig — easy and gently — for crook connections. Lots of cases are still wide-open. Joe, you draw the chauffeur. Says his name is Albert Johnson. Claims he's a powerful church-going fellow. Still, he — watch him, huh?"

"I'll watch him," Joe promised.

Duffy said, "How about the men to work with Hill, Chief?"

One of the telephones on Belden's desk jangled.

"Give him boys with Middle Ward experience," Belden said. Picking up the 'phone, he growled, "Yes?"

In an aside to Joe, Duffy said, "Make it Shaw from Homicide, Carlton from the Bandit Squad —"

Chuckling at the 'phone, Belden told it, "Sure. Put *him* on."

"— Swenson from Auto —" Duffy continued.

"Ah! Mr. Prosecutor!" Belden exclaimed at the 'phone.

"— and Goldberg from Identification," Duffy concluded, matching the grin on Belden's face.

"We're happy as kids about it!" Belden told the 'phone. "Right this minute Detective Hill's on his way to the cell block for a session with their chauffeur."

Joe looked at Duffy.

"Take a peep at all five of 'em," the Inspector told him. "Skip the murders for the time being. Just touch your man for the over-all number of stick-ups. Then come back here."

Joe had seen the same kind of scared, repentant men before. They were in separate cells. Four were pale-faced nonentities who stared at him as he slowly walked past their barred cages, out of solemn eyes that begged for pity. The fifth man — the chauffeur — was exactly like his confederates. Except that his skin was black.

Stepping close to the bars, Joe said, "I'm Detective Hill."

A trace of surprise showed through the worry, shame, and fear etched in the ebony face.

"I knowed," the chauffeur said, "a few of our folks in Oldhaven was cops. But I thought they was all just street cops."

Joe said, "They tell me you're in a little trouble, Johnson."

The man nodded. "Th' Chief — he come to see me. I said I'd talk."

"Chief Belden's not a bad fellow to talk to."

"I seen you now. So — Well, our people is always so far behind. I was just trying to — to catch up a little bit."

"No regular work?"

"I had been chauffeuring for a rich woman — named Mrs. Stevens. But th' job — it was running out. And I met them other four."

Joe smiled encouragingly. "Yes. The others."

"You see — it was like this," the chauffeur said. "Mrs. Stevens — she's a very old lady. She got sick. Before she let 'em take her to th' hospital, she said to me, 'Albert, you've been with me such a short time; I didn't make the same provisions for you. Because you're still young and healthy.' Well, that made me —"

Joe interrupted. "Ever pull a hold-up all by yourself?"

"Naw sir! Only with them other four."

"How many jobs did you do?"

"We done — lemme figure. Yeah. Twenty. And I just driv th' car. That's all I done. Ever!"

Backing away from the bars, Joe said, "Johnson, we'll talk again — in a little while. Huh?"

A talker, it would be a long time before the chauffeur's confessional jag wore off. Joe left the cell block.

When he reentered the office, the Chief was still on the 'phone with the Prosecutor. But joy had vanished. Belden was in a rage, shouting, "Yes, I said th' punks would talk! But they've been on a three months stick-up spree. So how'n hell can we feel 'em for leads if we rush 'em off to that alley-house office you run?"

As the Chief paused, Duffy told Joe, "That Prosecutor's loaded with a tom-cat's nerve. He's pushing us to arraign these five bums — like we'd jugged 'em for loitering!"

"Huh!" Belden yelled at the 'phone. "I don't have the men to do it that quick. You said *Monday* morning first. Now you switch it to *Saturday* morning — so they'll be in court by Monday!"

"He's crazy!" Duffy said.

"You're crazy!" Belden said. "But I'll do it! Now get th' hell off my line!" He jammed the 'phone in its cradle with a bang.

"Try to be nice to some people!" Duffy said. "Try it!"

"Lowell will do anything to be Governor!" Belden said. "He's after headlines. No skin off *his* political beak if *we* mess it up."

Duffy said, "Well, we just got to try and deliver —"

"You listen!" Belden interrupted. "I want the last scrap of information pumped out of that mob. By Saturday morning too! See?"

Duffy said, "Yes, sir."

"You'll proceed from the first to the last stick-up. And —"

"In *that* order?" Duffy asked, interrupting.

"Huh! We're only the police!" Belden said. "Will a spread in Sunday's papers land us in the Governor's mansion?"

Duffy said, "Oh! *Lowell* wants it that way."

"Huh! So no sleep for the men you put on it till it's all tied and wrapped up. Understand?"

Homicide's Shaw, Bandit's Carlton, Auto's Swenson, and Identification's Goldberg — the men Inspector Duffy had named to work with Joe in connection with processing the Quinter chauffeur for arraignment — were agreed that meeting the Prosecutor's deadline was one thing. It was another thing, they said, not to miss an important lead in the insane race to beat the exacting hands of the Prosecutor's arbitrary watch. Something would go wrong.

Four other crews — each a duplicate in unit composition — stood with Joe and his particular colleagues and listened grimly to Duffy's procedural instructions.

"Yes, you gotta finish this job by Saturday morning," the Inspector said. "And if you think you can skip being thorough, think some more. See? Comb every word these punks speak, run down every name, every place they mention. For leads. Lots of cases are still wide-open. At all times," he continued, "keep our five

guests separated. Be informal, gentle, sympathetic. They'll cooperate. First, let 'em spill their guts. Then ease 'em into handing you the date and location of their first robbery. Clear that with me, so that all of you will be certain about that point. Same procedure with murder. Next, get the over-all number of jobs they did together. Then work forward. Get the relevant, material details of each successive crime: hold-up and/or robbery-murder. End with the last stick-up. See?"

The processing began at seven o'clock Wednesday night.

The chauffeur insisted upon addressing himself only to Joe, who had to carry the interview. But there were no pointed questions during this stage of the game. Johnson just rambled, naming personalities, places, continuity, and chronology. Goldberg jotted down the man's more pertinent statements. At 11 P.M. Joe went to Duffy, told him the culprit's recollection of the first robbery's date and location.

"He still maintains," Joe added, "there were twenty jobs in all."

"Those three points — date, location, total jobs — check."

"Five murders. They occurred during the sixth, eighth, tenth, fifteenth, and eighteenth robberies."

"That checks. What about the car?" Duffy said.

"Just one. Belonged to his employer, Mrs. Stevens. She's in Wildwood Hospital — an incurable, he says."

"I'll check on her."

Joe said, "Before each job he'd steal a set of license plates and substitute them for the set registered in the Stevens name."

"Swenson from Auto will check that. After each job the boys looked for him down in the Middle Ward. How come they missed him?"

"When Mrs. Stevens had to go to the hospital, she told him he could use a room in her apartment."

"He'd hole-up there after a job. What about his dough?"

"He says he put most of it in the Oldhaven Merchants' Bank."

"An original stash for hold-up money. Check the bank first thing in the morning. Where'd he spend the rest?"

"Says he gave some to his church." "Forget it. Where else?"

"Girls. Goldberg has their names. He'd pick 'em up in the Mattox Hotel, a place run by a woman named Big Rose."

"Goldberg is Identification. I'll have him check the women for records and send Shaw to check the hotel. That's a Middle Ward dump, Joe. Too bad we couldn't spare you when this case first got going. Ten to one, you'd have done what the other boys' faces didn't let them do — pick up Johnson's trail. Maybe you'd have run into him there — at the Mattox — before all the killings started."

Joe said, "Water over the dam now."

"Yeah. I'm going to have Carlton round up witnesses. Need 'em for line-ups. You check his room in the

Stevens place. Take a squad car. Collect his clothes."

When Joe returned to Headquarters, after a look at the Stevens apartment, he had the chauffeur identify the particular garments he had worn during the commission of each crime; each piece of apparel was then labeled with a date, time notation, and a stated location. Next, Joe turned his attention to a long stream of witnesses who viewed the Bandit Quinter in intermittent line-ups. He visited the bank, made notes on deposits and withdrawals.

Late Thursday afternoon, during a joint conference with the five processing detective contingents, the Inspector said, "Speed it up! Get 'em out there where the action occurred. Let 'em show you how they did it — in front of a camera. Tomorrow — that's Friday — and not a second later than four P.M., we got to let the stenographers start taking down their formal statements. Move!"

Sleep had been a stranger to Joe on Wednesday night. Sleep and Joe remained strangers Thursday night. He kept himself going with cigarettes, sandwiches, and lots of black coffee. Friday afternoon, at ten minutes to four, he marched up to Duffy.

"We have the details and the photographed 'reenactments' of Johnson's part in nineteen successive crimes," Joe announced.

"Well?" Duffy said, frowning.

"We didn't have time to run him through job number twenty."

Duffy grinned. "Okay. The cake's yours."

"Huh?"

"The Prosecutor's really after the details on the five killings. He'll schedule the easiest and juiciest murder for quick trial, so he can grab lots of headlines. Couple of crews had to cram, skip — to get in the murders. They're three and four jobs short, Joe."

"Then I don't get the dunce cap."

"Naw. You and your boys just trot Johnson through the nineteen jobs and he'll sing the whole tune to that last stick-up by ear. The Prosecutor ain't worrying about what *we* miss. It's nearly four o'clock. Get going, Joe."

Each processing detective crew herded its own Quintet culprit up to the fourth floor of Headquarters and into an enormous, open, desk-strewn, rectangular room whose facilities were officially the property of the rank and file members of the Homicide Squad. Four of the Quintet were placed, separately, in the big rectangle's corners. Joe, his crew, and a stenographer gave Johnson a chair near a cluster of battered desks in the very middle of the room. He began making his formal statement Friday at precisely four P.M.

It was a slow, tedious task: boring, unexciting. They started with the first crime. Deleting extraneous matter as they went along, they retained as best they could the essential, relevant facts which were material to Johnson's own acts and words, and

such other acts and words as occurred or were spoken in his presence. When an original copy and a stack of carbons were typed, Goldberg read the content aloud to the chauffeur. Johnson read it aloud, then signed the confession. Joe and his colleagues provided witnessing signatures. A notary's seal was affixed to the document. And the procedure began again in connection with crime number two.

It went on and on. The detectives and culprits alike drank coffee, chewed sandwiches, lit one cigarette from another, and wistfully toyed with the idea of climbing in a bed.

Inspector Duffy roared, "Chief Belden's at home. He just 'phoned me. He's been in constant contact with Prosecutor Lowell. They'll be arriving here at Headquarters in a little while. Speed it up! How far off is Saturday morning?"

Gradually, the glare from the room's blazing lights turned the working men's haggard eyes into dull rubies. Their heads ached. Joe and his crew finished with Johnson's nineteenth statement.

When Homicide's Shaw said it was already Saturday morning, Joe glanced at his wrist-watch. It was one A.M.

Bandit's Carlton said, "I'm dead on my feet."

"These boys," Shaw said, "just didn't mix with other crooks. They ain't handed us a single lead yet. Whiz this last one along."

Carlton said, "Joe, take a squint at

that Wednesday's 'squeal sheet.' Go by that — and get this job over with!"

Glancing at a piece of paper, Joe said, "Give us the facts on your last job, Johnson."

Johnson said, "Tuesday night, I stole a set of license plates. Then I went in a 'phone booth and called the poolroom where them other boys was at. We got a job set for next day."

"Go on," Joe said.

"I went straight home," Johnson said, "and got in bed. Next morning — Wednesday — I got up at eight o'clock. I was by myself. I never took nobody to my room — 'cause ol' Mrs. Stevens trusted me. Once, her lawyer — Mr. Colbax Todd — writ a 'portant paper for her. She told me what was in it, axted me to put my name on it. So she musta trusted me. And I —"

Joe interrupted. Irrelevancies were creeping in. "You got up at eight A.M."

Johnson said, "That paper never took care of me — lak it did them others. So I let them other boys talk me into —"

Joe interrupted again. "You got up at eight o'clock!"

"All that," Johnson said, "was before Mrs. Stevens went to th' hospital."

Shaw said, "What did you do Wednesday after eight?"

"I fixed a meal," Johnson said, "and et it. I was nervous. So I went and got th' car and driv to th' Middle Ward."

"Take time out there to talk to anybody?" Joe asked.

"I seen Prophet Hamid. He was right in front of his temple on Nickle Street. I knowed him. So when he called me, I stopped th' car. He axted me would I go and git an ol' man by th' name of Tom Turner. And I said yes. I went."

Joe said, "Anybody go with you? Where does Turner live?"

"I was by myself. He live on Dawkins Place. I don't know th' number. I just knows th' house. I driv there. Ol' man Turner was just coming out his front door. I driv him to th' Prophet's temple. I never got out. I driv to Oldhaven Park and done what I always done in there — switched license plates on th' car."

"Go on," Joe said.

"Then I driv to Commerce Square. A loan shop we was going to rob was there. I parked a block off. Them four other boys walked past and went in th' loan shop. They run out, jumped in th' car, and I started it. A block off we run into a radio car with two cops in it. They was awful mad at us for hitting 'em. They found out we was robbers. So they 'rested all five of us."

Joe said, "It was eleven A.M. Just who is Tom Turner?"

"An ol' man what used to go to th' church where I goes at."

Shaw said, "What about Prophet Hamid?"

"Him?" Johnson said. "Everybody down in th' Middle Ward knows him. I seen him 'round lots."

"In the Mattox — for instance?" Shaw asked. "With Big Rose?"

"Yeah. He make lak he know what you thinking 'bout. I give him plenty chances to tell me my mind. He's just a lot of big mouf."

Shaw said, "This wraps it up, boys. I'll call Duffy." He did.

Duffy said, "You fellows all through?"

"'Cept for one thing," Johnson said.

"Yeah?" Duffy said. "What's that?"

"I b'lieves," Johnson replied, "I deserves a break — 'cause I just ain't what you can call *bad*. Before I met up with them four other boys, I had never been in no real trouble. Mrs. Stevens — she took very sick. She said to me, 'Albert, you'll need another job. Use the car to look for one if you like.' So I —"

Interrupting, Duffy said, "She didn't mean for you to use her car in twenty stick-ups and five murders."

"I never done th' killings," the chauffeur said. "I just driv th' car. For them other boys. Before that I had a good record. Axt my pastor, Reverend G. J. Ball. Axt Mrs. Stevens."

Duffy said, "She's comatose."

"She's *what*?" Johnson said.

"In a coma. Unconscious," Duffy explained.

"Oh," Johnson said. "But Detective Hill — he know th' real thing what made me rob folks. And I think he should help git me a break."

Duffy said, "First, give him a break. Sign this last statement."

"Okay. Sure! Didn't I sign them other statements?"

At two A.M. Joe got in an elevator. When he stepped out on the first floor, Chief Belden was waiting to go up.

"The arraignment is set for one P.M., Monday," Belden said. "You look busted up."

Joe was a big man: six feet one inch in height, with two hundred pounds of solid muscle appropriately strung along an excellently developed frame. Ordinarily, his eyes were a shade of brown in complete consonance with the chestnut hue of his skin. But now his eyes were bloodshot, his face a mat of unshaven black bristles, and his huge physique literally drooped.

He said, "I *feel* busted up too."

"I know," Belden said. "You needn't come in till noon, Monday."

Wearily, Joe stumbled out to the sidewalk in front of Headquarters just as several cars pulled up to the curb. Prosecutor Elwood Lowell and some of his assistants got out. A taxicab rounded a corner. Joe signaled its driver.

He got in the cab. "The Wallace Thurman Houses — Unit Four — on the far side of the Middle Ward."

Pulling away from the curb, the taxi-driver said, "What'd they have you down to Headquarters for, huh, buddy?"

Tired, on edge, Joe snatched a gold-plated shield out of his pocket. Sticking it over the driver's shoulder and under the man's nose, he said, "Cop!

Central Bureau. See? I'm in a hurry."

The tiny three-room apartment on the fourth floor of the model housing development where Joe maintained bachelor quarters was a welcome sight. Joe took one look at himself in the bathroom mirror. Then he stumbled into the bedroom and collapsed across the bed without removing anything except his hat.

The telephone awakened him. Rolling over, he picked up the jangling instrument and heard Chief Belden's voice say:

"Lad, Joe, my boy! This is a helluva crime, and I should be eternally incarcerated for committing it. But you've got to come back to Headquarters. Right away."

"Huh?" Joe grunted. "What time is it?"

"Four A.M.," Belden replied. "I know you just left here. But listen: an old-fashioned schoolteacher, named Middlesexton, brought a little colored kid down here just now. The kid says she don't trust white cops. Her teacher backs her up about that. If it wasn't for that teacher — wait'll you see her — we'd take the box."

Joe said, "Box?"

"Yes. The kid's got something in a box."

"There're ten other Negro cops in Oldhaven," Joe said.

"Yeah! In uniform," Belden said. "You know they can't — get th' hell down here, Detective Hill!"

"Yes, sir," Joe said, adding, "as soon as I put on my hat!"

Luck brought a cab for Joe in ten minutes. At fifteen minutes to five Saturday morning he entered Chief Belden's office where he found the Chief, a freshly shaven Inspector Duffy, Prosecutor Elwood Lowell, and two other people. One was a gray-haired little old lady, dressed in a style years and years out of date, whose chalk-white countenance was a combination of grim sternness and prim stubbornness. The other was a very small black girl. She was shabbily clothed, but clean. Her eyes were big, round, packed with frank suspicion and jammed with naked fear. With trembling hands she clutched a package about five inches long, three inches wide, two inches deep — wrapped in white paper, tied with a green string.

The Chief was seated behind his desk. Duffy and the Prosecutor occupied chairs near Belden. Their faces seemed unusually pink. The child and the little old lady sat side by side in straight-back chairs against one of the room's walls. The little old lady favored Joe's rumpled clothes, bearded face, and red eyes with one glance. She reacted unfavorably.

Looking at the little old lady, the child said, "He's colored. But is he a real policeman? He don't wear clothes lak none."

"He *doesn't* wear clothes like one, June," the old lady replied.

"Yes, ma'am," the child said. "Doesn't — like — one."

The little old lady fixed Chief Belden with a stern stare. "Is this the person we've been waiting for?"

Belden gulped, sputtering, "Er — madam — he —"

"Miss Middlesexton, please."

"Yes, ma'am," Belden said. "Miss Middlesexton."

Duffy said, "This person — as Miss Middlesexton calls Detective Hill — has been continuously at work since Wednesday afternoon. He hasn't had time to bathe, shave, or put on clean clothing."

The Inspector had addressed the Chief who regained enough composure to say, "Detective Hill, ma'am, is a graduate of a most reputable university where he was a high ranking student and an ace athlete. He won — and I do mean *won* — a post in our Department when he was twenty-two years old. He spent seven and a half years in uniform before we had the good sense to upgrade him to plainclothes status. For more than a year now he's been a member of my own personal organization, the Central Bureau."

"And we think," Duffy added, "he's a nicely balanced piece of physical and mental machinery."

"June," Miss Middlesexton told the child, "I'm satisfied that this man is an authentic officer. You may tell him your story."

Belden said, "Ma'am, let's hear a word from you first."

"Thank you," Miss Middlesexton said. "June, whose last name is Jones, is a second grade pupil of mine at Public School Twenty. Early Friday morning she came to my desk and asked me to escort her to a policeman,

adding that he must be colored. Unfortunately, Chief Belden, some Middle Ward children are afraid of —"

Belden said hastily, "Please continue, ma'am."

"I didn't care to become involved in a trifling matter," Miss Middlesexton said. "I demanded that June tell me why she needed a policeman."

"She wouldn't talk?" Belden said.

Miss Middlesexton nodded. "I know now I was too exacting. At one o'clock this morning June rang my doorbell at Fifty-four Wilson Avenue."

Belden interrupted. "Where does June live?"

The child said, "Sixty-eight Dawkins Place. Top floor. Rear."

Belden leaned forward. "Miss Middlesexton, June is a mere child. Dawkins Place and Wilson Avenue are five miles apart. How'd she know where you live? How'd she get there?"

"Once a semester for the past thirty years," Miss Middlesexton explained, "I entertain my school charges in my home. Of course, on those occasions, I escort them there. June attended the last party a month ago. I presume she —"

Looking at Joe, June interrupted. "I walked to where she lives at."

Miss Middlesexton said, "June showed me the contents of the box —" The little old lady swallowed hard, her pale face turning gray.

Belden smiled at June. "Let's see what's in your box. Hmnn?"

The child looked at Joe.

"Chief Belden," he said, "is a nice man. Cross my heart!"

The child got out of her chair and sat on the floor. She untied her package's green string, stripped off its white paper, holding the underside up so Joe could see it.

Wearily, he sat down on the floor beside the child. "Letters apparently cut out of newspapers," he said, "are pasted here, saying, 'Talk only to the Lord's True Messenger.'"

Duffy got out of his chair. "It's an ordinary match-box," he said. "Slide it open, kid."

As enormous tears welled up in her eyes, the child said, "Pa Tom never come home Wednesday night. Nor Thursday night. Nor before I slipped off from Ma Grace, and — and —"

Miss Middlesexton said, "I understand June's parents were killed some time ago in an automobile accident. She lives with an elderly pair of grandparents. Her maternal grandparents."

Duffy said, "Come on kid. Open the box."

The child said, "There was another box — before this one. Me and Ma Grace found it Thursday morning laying on th' floor in th' hall — jes' outside th' door. Ma Grace acted real scared. 'Chile,' she tole me, 'don't you talk to nobody 'bout this!' When I come back from school, Ma Grace was laying on her bed, crying, moaning, and praying to God to tell her what to do. Friday morning I found this here box. Pa Tom — he was still gone. So I never tole Ma Grace I had done found it. Miss Middlesexton — she's white. But I trusts her. So I axted her to help me."

Joe said, "Pa Tom. Tom. Dawkins Place."

"He my grandpa," the child said. "And that's where I lives at."

Miss Middlesexton said, "Her grandparents are Thomas and Grace Turner."

Belden picked up one of the telephones on his desk. "Rush this," he said. "Steer a prow to sixty-eight Dawkins Place, top floor, rear flat. Investigate the absence of Thomas Turner."

Miss Middlesexton said, "June, you must — must open it now."

"Yes, ma'am," the child said. Then she slid the box open.

Inspector Duffy said, "Good God!" "What is it?" Belden said.

Joe said, "A finger. It's black. A piece of cotton is stuck on the spot where it was cut off from —"

He stopped talking because the child had burst into loud hysterical sobs. His weariness seemed to evaporate. Anger rose up inside of him, heating his brain, stimulating it, making bits of images and word pictures rush through his mind. He stayed right where he was — on the floor — and took the screaming little girl in his arms, cradling her, rocking with her from side to side.

He was only half-aware that Miss Middlesexton had seated herself beside him to help soothe the child with a woman's voice and hand. He hardly noticed the routine fashion with which Belden and Duffy and Prosecutor Elwood Lowell were handling the telephones on the Chief's desk —

summoning Homicide Squad Lieutenant O'Hara, photographers, fingerprint technicians, an Assistant Police Surgeon, Prosecutor's Investigators. Joe gave practically all his attention to the assembly of image and word fragments so that he could examine the result for a clue to what he knew would be missing.

He heard Belden saying, "Joe! Joe! Snap out of it!"

"Yes, sir." He looked at his wrist-watch. It said 5:45 A.M.

"This is your case, Joe," Belden said. "Looks like a nasty one."

Duffy said, "Joe needs rest."

One of the telephones on the Chief's desk jangled. When Belden replaced the instrument, he said, "Prowl car boys reporting on the trip to Dawkins Place. They found another box outside the Turner's hall door. They broke into the flat and found Grace Turner — she was very old — a D-O-A."

"D-O-A?" Miss Middlesexton said. "What does that mean?"

Duffy glanced at the child whom Joe was still cradling in his arms. She had quieted down. "Do it mean," she said, "that Ma Grace done been scared so — she's dead?"

"D-O-A," Duffy told Miss Middlesexton, "means dead on arrival."

"Frightened into her grave!" the little old lady exclaimed. "Can't you do something?"

Joe said, "I think I'm on to what it's about, ma'am. I want June to answer a few questions. What work do your grandparents do, June?"

"They worked," the child replied, "a long time ago. But not now. Because of th' Gov'ment checks and my state check."

"Do you mean," Joe said, "that your grandparents get old age pension checks, and that you —"

June interrupted. "Yes, sir. And I'm what they call a 'State Child' — 'cause my parents is dead. Th' state — it gives Pa Tom and Ma Grace money for my keep."

Belden said, "That kind of money isn't big enough for a motive —"

Joe interrupted. "June, where'd your grandparents *used* to work?"

"Pa Tom — he driv th' carriage. Ma Grace — she done th' cooking. It was for a rich lady. Then she got a automobile. And she give up her big estate. And Pa Tom and Ma Grace — they was too old to do much more work. So then my father and mother — they chauffeured and cooked for —"

"Now this is it!" Joe said. "What was the rich lady's name?"

"I don't rightly know her name," the child replied. "Pa Tom and Ma Grace — they got mad at th' lady. Because she said they was too old to work. And Pa Tom wanted th' rich lady to keep th' carriage. But she got th' car. That was how my mother and father was killed — in the car one day, going somewhere. And Pa Tom — he said he never wanted to hear that rich lady's name called in front of his ears."

Joe said, "Where do you go to church, June?"

"I still goes to Reverend G. J. Ball's church. Pa Tom and Ma Grace — they quit going there. Only old people can go where they go. Reverend Ball — he used to come to th' house to ax Pa Tom and Ma Grace to come back to his church. But Pa Tom — he said that all his life he'd been going to Reverend Ball's kind of church and that his kind of church weren't doing our people no good. Reverend Ball — he said no cult was going to help our people either."

"I wonder," Joe said, "if Prosecutor Lowell will telephone a lawyer for us. If the Prosecutor does it, we'll save time."

"Anything," Lowell said. "What's the lawyer's name?"

Duffy said, "Have you got something, Joe?"

"I'll know after the Prosecutor makes that 'phone call," Joe replied. "His name now. It's in our files. But maybe I can remember it. Bard? Hodge? No. Rod? Doesn't fit."

"You'd better use the files," Belden said.

"I've got it," Joe said. "The name's Colbax Todd."

"Todd?" Prosecutor Lowell said. "What's Colbax Todd got to do with this?"

Joe said, "Ask him if he has a Mrs. Stevens as a client. Ask him if he recently drew up a will for her in which Thomas and Grace Turner appear among the beneficiaries. If so, for what amount?"

Lowell said, "I'll make the call. But I know Todd will insist he has to con-

sult his client before he can give —"

Duffy interrupted. "She's comatose in Wildwood Hospital. Or was. By now, she may be dead."

"Oh!" Lowell said. "Then Todd may — I'll 'phone him."

"Maybe this'll add up!" Belden exclaimed, motioning Lowell to a 'phone on his desk.

When Lowell put down the instrument, he said, "Todd's client died about five hours ago. She left the Turners an outright bequest of fifty thousand dollars."

"Okay, Joe," Belden said. "You've got the motive. Now what?"

Joe said, "Can we stage a couple of raids? Simultaneously? And right away?"

"I told you," Belden said, "this was your case. We raid. Now!"

Joe, Belden and Duffy, riding in the first car of a stream of police vehicles, left Headquarters at 6:45 A.M. The last shades of night were bowing out of the sky and the city was fast discarding sleep for another day of toil and turmoil. The cars kept their sirens silent.

"I've been watching you, Joe," Chief Belden said. "I th k this thing's made you mad."

Joe didn't say anything.

The police caravan swung into the section of Oldhaven known as the Middle Ward. It was not at all unlike any other Negro community in any other northern Big City. Most of it was slum area.

Duffy said, "We're on Nickle

Street now. So we're almost there."

"The other raiding party, according to you, Joe," Belden said, "is more likely to find Turner than we are."

Duffy said, "As soon as we break in at our end, I'll cover the 'phones and call Lieutenant O'Hara at the other end of the job."

The car stopped. Belden said, "This place was once a store."

The front of the building before which they stopped had been renovated so that it resembled a combination of sectarian structures: a church, a mosque, a miniature cathedral.

Duffy said, "Give the guys a couple of seconds to get set."

"Pretty early," Belden said. "The door's probably locked."

"There's a bell," Joe said.

"Think he'll try and start something, Joe?" Belden said.

Joe replied, "I hope he does!"

"You keep your head," Belden advised. "No matter how mad you —"

Duffy said, "This is it. Let's go."

Joe rang the bell. A woman opened the door, grasped who the visitors were, and started to back away.

"Just take it easy, sister," Duffy told her. "How many 'phones in this place?"

"One," the woman said. "It's in the office."

"Where's Hamid?" Belden asked her.

"In the office," the woman replied.

Belden said, "No noise. Get going. Take us there."

The woman led them through a small, dark auditorium. She opened

a door. Pushing her inside, they closed the door behind them. A man sat at a desk on which a telephone rested.

Belden said, "Are you Prophet Hamid?"

The man stood up. He was short and very slim. The hair on his head was long, kinky, and reddish. Some of it made a sharp, straight line just under his nose and a Vandyke on his chin. His skin was a freckled saddle-yellow. He wore a black cutaway coat with satin lapels, a clerical collar, striped pants, and shiny black shoes with pointed toes. He looked like a dressed-up bantam rooster.

"May I use your 'phone?" Duffy said, taking over the instrument so that the man had to step away from the desk.

"You're up early this morning," Belden told the man.

The man said, "We always have an early service on Saturdays."

"That used to be," Belden said.

"But no more."

"What do you mean?" the man said. "Just who are you?"

Joe said, "The police."

"You can't come in here like this!" the man exclaimed. "This is a holy place. I'm a holy man!"

"Shut up!" Belden told him.

For a while nobody said anything. The only sound in the room was the hard breathing of the woman. Then there was a knock on the door and Duffy said, "Come in!"

A detective opened the door "We've combed the place," he said

"Upstairs. In the cellar. We didn't find him."

Belden nodded, waved the detective out of the room, and looked at Duffy. "'Phone Lieutenant O'Hara. See what he found."

After Duffy put back the 'phone, he said, "Joe was right, Chief. O'Hara found Turner, three fingers missing, stashed in the Mattox Hotel. The woman who runs the place — Big Rose — is talking."

Belden said, "Okay, Hamid. Now you talk."

"The lot of you!" Hamid said. "Get out of here!"

Joe walked over to Hamid and slapped his face.

Belden said, "For your own sake, Hamid — talk."

Standing close to Hamid, Joe said, "How long have Thomas and Grace Turner been members of your cult?"

"Don't crowd me!" Hamid said.

"Not long enough, huh?" Joe said.

"Not long enough for you to work your real racket on them."

"Just how does he do it, Joe?" Duffy asked.

"As soon as old people, like the Turners, fall under the spell of his mumbo-jumbo," Joe said, "he demands the last pieces of property they have in the world — their insurance policies. He uses his temple as a front. By persuasion, by force, by tricks, by any means he can think of, Hamid makes the old people change the beneficiaries originally named in their policies so that when they die the money is bequeathed to his temple.

The old people will usually sign any paper he hands them. Occasionally, he has them borrow money on their policies. Frequently, he makes them surrender the policies for their cash value. And he pockets the money."

"Hamid," Duffy said, "we've been questioning one of the Quintet Bandits. I mean Albert Johnson. We know that Johnson told you that a wealthy woman, Mrs. Stevens, had named Thomas and Grace Turner in her will. We also know that Johnson told you that Mrs. Stevens was dying. You take it from there, Joe."

"There's a clincher — a big payoff — to Hamid's racket," Joe said. "He cuts the whole hog. He knows his own people — Negroes. He draws his cult membership from the most ignorant, the most superstitious, the most stupid of them. He knows they regard all public institutions — including law-enforcement agencies and the courts — as hostile to their interests. So he inveigles his ancient cultists into signing an agreement giving all they own to his temple."

Duffy said, "Hmnn-huh. When he learned that the Turners were beneficiaries in the Stevens will and Mrs. Stevens was dying, he moved fast."

Moving still closer to Hamid, Joe said, "He got his hands on old man Turner, got Big Rose to stash the man in the Mattox Hotel. But Turner held out. Time was short. Hamid cut off the old man's fingers, one by one. He sent the fingers to Grace Turner to terrorize her into coming to him to beg for mercy."

"Move away from me!" Hamid screamed at Joe.

Joe's right shoulder moved suddenly. His right fist smashed hard against Hamid's mouth. Hamid went down on the floor, mouthing profanity and blood.

Belden said, "Easy, Joe. Easy, boy. Don't lose your head."

Duffy said, "Want to talk now, Hamid? Before Detective Hill really goes to work on you? The Chief may try and stop Hill but I won't!"

Belden said, "Hamid, Mrs. Stevens is dead. Bet you didn't know."

Duffy said, "And guess what? The County Prosecutor is going into the courts to have Tom Turner declared incompetent. The Turners' grandchild will get the Stevens dough."

"She wouldn't have got it," Hamid said, "if the old man had signed!"

"The terrorizing you gave Grace Turner," Belden said, "killed her."

Duffy laughed. "Prosecutor Lowell says we can't make a murder rap stick to you, Hamid. But we insist that he have you indicted for murder. Not long ago he asked us — the police — to do the impossible. We did it. Now we want him to do it. After all, no matter how you did it, you murdered Grace Turner. We want you, Hamid — for murder."

"Tell me just one thing," Hamid said. "Johnson — that chauffeur — didn't know. He said he thought it would be about a thousand dollars. But just how much did that Mrs. Stevens leave the Turners?"

Belden said, "Huh! This is funny. This is going to give this rat a bigger thrill than the chair. Tell him, Joe."

Joe said, "Fifty thousand dollars."

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THE KNIFE OF THE CELESTIAL BROTHERHOOD

by LEMUEL DE BRA

I do not know how long I had sat there listening to the queer tale that my friend Chen Wan recited to me in his quiet, charming Cantonese. I know only that I became suddenly aware that he had ceased speaking, that my forgotten pipe was rank with cold ashes. On the wall back of Chen Wan I saw the colored paper lanterns stir gently in the evening breeze. I became conscious of the odor of incense mingled with the heavy fragrance of Oriental flowers. From the walk below, one of the narrow, twisting alleys in San Francisco's Chinatown, came the stealthy drag of Chinese slippers, the muffled sound of voices in harsh, guttural undertones. Opposite me, his arms resting on the ebony table, sat Chen Wan, his head bowed, his face in shadows.

I rapped the dottle from my pipe, refilled it, and struck a match. At that, as though the sound had startled him from reverie, Chen raised his head.

"Well, Minturn," he said, dropping into his crisp, precise English, "what would you think of it? If you were in my place, what would you do?"

"Hanged if I know, Chen!" I replied truthfully. "It's a devilish queer situation. It doesn't sound real."

"Ah, but it is! See here!" From a

drawer in the table, Chen took something wrapped in a yellow silk handkerchief, and laid it down before my eyes. I saw the soft glimmer of steel, and made out presently a long Chinese knife with straight blade and a corded handle.

"This," spoke Chen quietly, "is the knife of the Celestial Brotherhood; the knife with which I am to ~~kill~~ Bock Gee, a man whom I know only by sight; a man who, so far as I have ever learned, has never done me harm."

I was too amazed for speech. Chen Wan and I had been intimate friends for many years. I met him first in China when I was there years ago as a secret agent of the Treasury Department. Then, when I went to the University of California to specialize in Oriental languages I found Chen there, and our friendship grew. He was a quiet sort, eager to learn, and almost worshipful in his admiration of America and American ideals and institutions. In those days I found it very easy to think of Chen Wan as a friend, very difficult to remember that he was of the mysterious Orient.

I had not heard from him for some time when, on this evening, I received an urgent summons to call at his

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